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PLANTS IN ORNAMENT

MOST of the nearly thirty kinds of plants listed as being represented in the various materials exhibited in Class Room B from March 15 to April 20, to illustrate the use of plants in ornament and design, are natives of the Old World, as might have been expected, since the articles exhibited are mostly of foreign manufacture. With the exception of the sunflower, of which the fifty species known are all natives of America, nearly all the plants originated either in Europe or in Asia. Africa is represented only by the papyrus. Some of the genera have other species that occur in America, but it is not probable that the species used for decorative purposes are native, though we have wild kinds of grapes, roses, oaks, iris, thistle, and violets.

Few people realize that many of the most common wild flowers of the Eastern states have been introduced from Europe, such as the tall field buttercups and clovers, daisies, dandelions and thistles, also strawberry and wild carrot.

Economic plants lead in their importance to man, with the following represented:—wheat, olive, grape, almond, onion, poppy, pineapple, strawberry, pomegranate, palm, and papyrus. Of the purely decorative plants, the lotus, hyacinth, tulip, crocus, narcissus, iris, and ivy are associated with many ancient myths and legends, while in more modern times others have become symbols of nations or races, such as the rose, oak, thistle, iris, peony, and chrysanthemum. America is not rich in either myths or legends associated with its native

plants, but some of our species are of economic value and widely cultivated, such as the potato and tomato, many of the pumpkin, squash, and cucumber family, and the Indian corn and sweet potato. Of these, the maize lends itself best to decorative design, but the others are worthy of study.

Many of our native American wild flowers are loved and admired by those who know them, but have not yet been extensively used in art or design; the reason for this is that they are generally more frail and perishable than other plants and harder to obtain, though many of them may be successfully cultivated and can be bought from commercial dealers. Of the Eastern ones may be mentioned the pussy-willow, May-flower, columbine, bloodroot, hepatica, jack-in-the-pulpit, wild pinks, lilies and orchids, Virginia cowslip, cardinal flower and gentian, azalea, and laurel; while the Southern states boast of their pink dogwoods and fringe trees, magno-



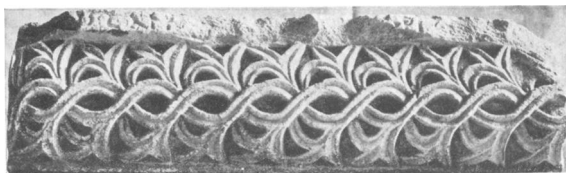
WOODCUT BY HANS WEIDITZ
FROM THE BRUNFELS HERBAL OF 1530

lias, Gordonias and flame azaleas, rhododendrons and holly. The Central and Western states are not without their floral treasures, among them the Gilias, Nemophilas and Godetias, the pasque-flower and long-spurred Rocky Mt. columbines, the Matilija and California poppies, and the various species of Calochortus known as Mariposa lilies. These are all flowering plants, but among the flowerless families, the ferns, mosses, and seaweeds, particularly the brilliantly colored species of Algae, there are many that could be used to good effect in laces, linens, wall-papers, and so forth; nor should the woody and

quaint fleshy fungi be omitted. We hope the day is not far distant when American art will include many American plants and American manufacturers will realize the

large and lucrative field that is still practically virgin territory.

ELIZABETH G. BRITTON.



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